

Dear Members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee:

My name is Radeana Hastings. I am a graduate intern who oversees the campus food pantry, Maria's Place, at Central Connecticut State University. I am writing in support of HB No.5033. This bill significantly impacts our students here at CCSU, many of whom are not traditional students. Our students often have to make sacrifices, like not eating a nutritious meal, paying for expenses that will get them through school, or working more than two jobs to continue to support themselves through school and their families. I am including testimonials from our Swipe Out Hunger program, which provides meals from Sodexo to students who need food assistance during the semester.

Student 1:

I am a full-time student and mother of three beautiful children. I take most of my classes during the day while my children are at school. Some days my last class ends at 4:30 p.m. I spend most of my day on campus between my work-study and my volunteer internship on campus, so I am unable to eat a nutritious meal during the day. I learned about the Devil's Den on campus, however I only work part-time at this time and due to hardship, my household is low-income so I cannot afford to buy lunch. I bring what I can with me, however meal swipes will assist me through this hardship, and I can ensure that I have a nutritious meal every now and then on campus.

Student 2:

I am an off-campus commuter that has been going to CCSU for five years now. My family has been going through a lot of financial struggles ever since COVID began and my mother has been on disability for having multiple sclerosis for years. Since I have surpassed my financial aid after

my fourth year, I don't receive a sufficient refund to be able to afford any meal swipes. This is the current situation I am going through and being able to have swipes to not worry about a meal on campus would not only help with my physical but also my mental wellbeing.

Student 3:

I am a low-income student at Central. I have been going to the food pantry at Central for four years since I was a student here. I truly appreciate the food pantry and feel all schools should have a food pantry. I go right home and cook the items I collected at the food pantry. I am really grateful.

On a typical day for myself, I eat dinner when I get home, around 7:30 p.m., and that's often the first time that day when I will eat. I am used to that so it's not a big deal to me.

I cannot afford to eat during the day, so, I eat when I arrive home.

Thank you for these swipes. It may seem like it is just food. But some folks are more appreciative of it than others.

With Swipe Out Hunger, we provided 119 meals to 18 students this semester. Last semester, we provided 231 meals to 34 students. Food insecurity has a significant impact on the CCSU community. We had 52 visits to the food pantry during this semester alone. Last semester we had 160 visits to the food pantry. With these visits, I often had to worry about how we would stock the pantry, knowing that the food and items we provided were all donations. I encourage you to consider the struggles many students are facing when deciding on this bill. Your decision will impact many students here at CCSU and other universities.

I enthusiastically support H.B. 5033 and urge its passage.

Sincerely,

Radeana Hastings